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# MODERN POLAND

LUDWIK EHRLICH

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## MODERN POLAND\*

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LUDWIK EHRLICH

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Like every one of you, I have, since the earliest days of childhood, cherished a great number of wishes and desires, some of which perhaps appear at the present moment very childish, while others are more sublime. One of the earliest wishes that I remember was the wish to grow up. The wish that followed next was to be a street-car conductor, and after that to be a drayman. In quick succession I wanted to be a corporal, and from that it was only one step to wishing to be a general. Then I started dreaming of more important things. There was a time when I was dreaming of beautiful girls, there was a time when I wanted to improve the world and do away with sin and crime and poverty. And there was a time when I wanted to do research work and to be a scholar. But at all times ever since I remember, there has been one wish cherished as earnestly as any—more than any. It was the wish to serve Poland. However little I might do in that service, I wanted to serve her. And although you will realize that during the life of a Pole there are not many moments of real happiness, yet this is such a moment. For after having addressed during this war several audiences in different parts of England on the subject of Poland, and after having had the privilege of lecturing before the University of Oxford on the

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\* An address delivered at the University of California on March 5, 1917.

history of Poland, I am now fortunate enough to address this university, one of the foremost universities in America, on what is so dear to my heart. And to address you on the subject, to try to inform you about Poland, is to try to serve Poland, because the very thing that Poland wants is that people should know more about her. Since Poland was divided, was cut into pieces, at the end of the eighteenth century, ever so many calumnies have been spread about her. If you met anyone outside of Poland who had heard about her, as likely as not he would have heard things which on mere consideration would prove to be false.<sup>1</sup> But still those are the things you have heard. To call your attention to Poland is to serve her, and to be allowed to address an audience like this is an opportunity. I am obliged to you, Professor Noyes, for giving me this opportunity, and I am obliged to this audience for having come to hear me.

The Polish question is a very curious one. You may know, or perhaps you may not know, that people have asserted again and again that the Polish question did not exist. Fifty years ago that great charlatan, Thomas Carlyle, said that the Polish question was "a thing dead and buried." And today Carlyle's teaching is dead and buried, and the Polish question is as much alive as ever. Not many years ago, Prince von Bülow, sometime Chancellor of Germany (until 1908), after having resigned that position wrote a book, which has been translated into English under the title *Imperial Germany*. He is reported to be playing an important diplomatic rôle even during the present war, and hence his words are all the more characteristic of the German attitude. He said in his book:

(The) object . . . of our policy . . . is a fight for German nationality.... The task of solving this problem would probably have been easier for the Prussians and for the Poles if the artificial and untenable Grand Duchy of Warsaw, created by Napoleon, had not

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<sup>1</sup> Many old falsehoods are disproved in Dr. Lord's brilliant book on the *Second Partition of Poland* (Harvard University Press, 1915), based on the deepest research.

roused in the Poles the vain hope that in the course of European complications it might be possible to re-establish Polish independence. The Poles would very likely have been spared painful experiences on our side as well as on the other side of the frontier in 1830, 1848, and 1863, if the memory of the ephemeral creation of a state by the first Napoleon had not lived in their hearts. The thought that the partition of the Polish Republic among the Eastern Powers from 1793 to 1807 had only been temporary, naturally made it harder for the Poles... to regard the accomplished facts as final.<sup>2</sup>

Yes, we did regard the accomplished facts as not final. As much as we could, we did stick to our belief, expressed in the song to which no Pole ever listens sitting, the song, "Poland Is Not Yet Lost."

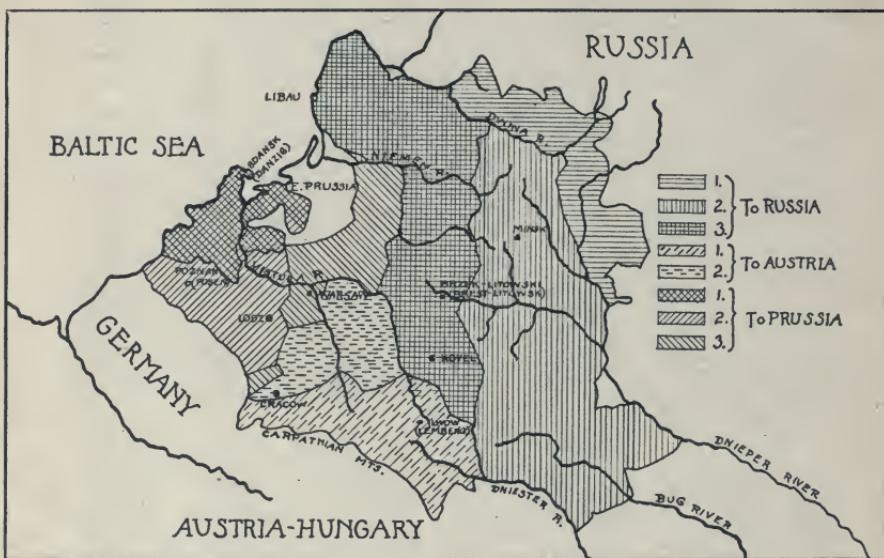
And when this war broke out, within a few weeks we had a declaration from the Russian commander-in-chief, a declaration that the partition of Poland had been a great wrong. And now you see all the three powers declaring that each one of them is going to give Poland happiness, to restore Poland. The Polish question is not dead; it is not buried.

If you speak of Poland today, you may mean any one of four things. First of all, you may mean the old empire, the empire as it existed in 1772, the empire which had been created by the union between the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. In 1772 Poland extended from a point near Berlin almost to Kief, and reached very close to the Black Sea.

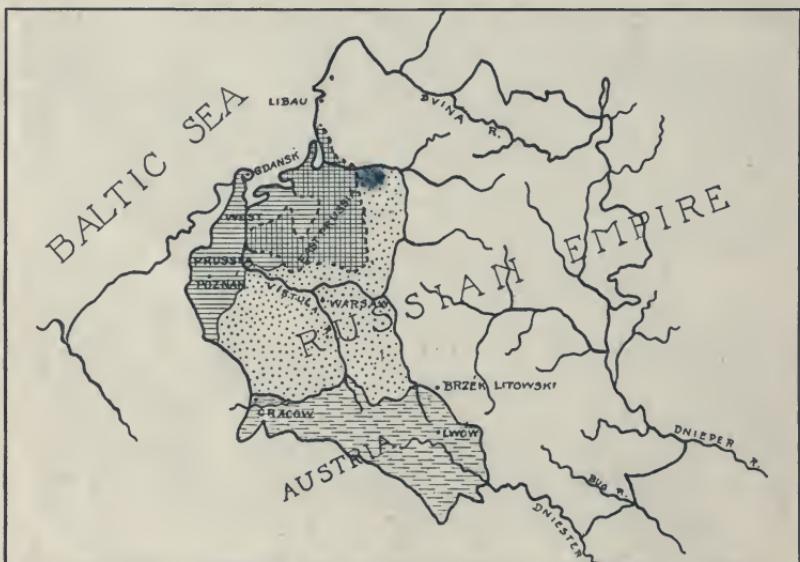
Secondly, you may mean by Poland, not the whole of Poland, but only what is usually called the Congress-kingdom, that is, the kingdom created by the Congress of Vienna in 1815, the part which is now usually referred to as Russian Poland. The Congress of Vienna in 1815 took away from Prussia part of what had been assigned to her in 1795 and formed this into what is now called Poland, that is to say, Russian Poland.

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<sup>2</sup> Von Bülow, *Imperial Germany*, trans. Lewenz, 7th impression, 1914, 252-253.



Partitions of Poland, 1772-1795.



Poland, 1914.

Thirdly, Poland might perhaps mean ethnographic Poland—that is, Poland as mentioned in the proclamation of Grand Duke Nicholas, in August, 1914. He promised to Poland freedom of language and religion and self-government. He meant, it was afterward explained, not the entire Poland of 1772, but only ethnographic Poland, only those regions in which the Poles formed the real majority, that territory corresponding with the ancient Kingdom of Poland, comprising Silesia, but distinguished from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

And fourthly, Poland may mean not a territory, but the Poland which is found in the hearts of the Polish people. There are at present something like twenty-three million of Poles. Of that number, not quite twenty million live on their own territory. The rest are dispersed; some of them were forced to leave their country, some have left it voluntarily, waiting for better times. There are in Prussia three or four million Poles. In Berlin alone, there are one hundred thousand; in Austria, nearly five million; in Russian Poland, over nine million Poles; and in other parts of Russia over two million.<sup>8</sup>

As to religion there are many Roman Catholics, but the Poles are by no means exclusively Roman Catholic. There are numerous Protestants, some of whom have attained to very high positions. For instance, in recent years the president of the Polish party in the Viennese Parliament was the president of the City of Cracow, a Protestant, and another Protestant, Professor Buzek, has been the representative of the most patriotic district of the City of Lwów (Lemberg). You find among the Poles a good many Jews. Now, some Jews do not consider themselves Poles. Some do, and in certain cases they have given such good proofs of being good Poles that they are considered in the fight for Polish freedom as important as any other Poles. It only depends upon the way in which they behave to the Poles. You find among the Poles even Mohammedans, who

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<sup>8</sup> Millions of Poles live abroad, mostly in America.

have not given up their religion, but still are very good Poles indeed.

These are some bald preliminary remarks about Poland. I shall now speak of the conditions of life. Poland is so vast that you can find any number of different landscapes. You find fertile plains in the southeast, the part from which I come, in Western and Central Poland. You find very rich coal mines in Silesia, in Galicia, and in Russian Poland; very rich oil fields in Galicia; you find very picturesque and beautiful mountains. The port of Dantzig is the old Polish port of Gdansk; the shore of the Baltic is very rich in vegetation. And there would be everything to make people happy if it were not for the political conditions.

What are these conditions? Let us first take Austria. From the time when Galicia first came under Austrian rule till 1867, there was much oppression. There were attempts to Germanize the country, to incite fratricidal struggles between the peasants and the other classes. There were actual cases, in 1846, when Austrian officials paid peasants to do violence to the persons of Polish landlords.<sup>4</sup> Galicia was swamped with foreign officials who did not understand the language of the inhabitants. None of them cared for the country. They wanted only to take advantage of the people. Things have changed since 1867. They changed, because in the wars of 1859 and 1866 the old administration of Austria broke down and the government had to compromise. They compromised, first of all, with a very strong party—the Polish party. Thereafter, in Galicia, the Poles were allowed, not privileges, but a measure of self-government. *In certain things and in a measure only.* However, taking advantage of this change, we have established schools at a rate which I think must seem astonishing to all outsiders. I have read, for instance, the report of an English official, sent about ten or fifteen years ago to investigate our system of schools. He could not find words

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<sup>4</sup> Treitschke, *Deutsche Geschichte*, ed. 5, v. 545.

to express his admiration for the way in which Galician schools, especially those at Lwów, were administered. Within fifty years the number of school children had risen from something like 180,000—I am quoting these figures from memory—in the 'sixties, to over a million. The Polish and the Ruthenian languages were recognized as languages which might be used in offices and schools. Of course, German has retained its privileges. It is still one of the official languages,<sup>5</sup> even if no Germans live in the district in question.

The chief difficulty has been, apart from the general incompetence of Austrian administration, the economic handicap, because the government has done everything it could to prevent the economic development of the country. Railroads can be established only by permission of the central government and that permission can be granted or refused at will. The same is true of the establishment of banks. There has been a customs line between Austrian Poland, Russian Poland, and German Poland.<sup>6</sup> There has been *no* customs line between Galicia, the German parts of Austria, and Hungary. Consequently, the Poles in Galicia had to pay more if they wanted to buy Polish products coming from Warsaw, than they would for those coming, for instance, from Vienna or Budapest.

But the great thing is that in the last few decades it has at least been possible to found economic and even political organizations. These organizations, which had formerly been forbidden, have changed the whole life of the country. There developed a system of co-operative societies which has brought to the consciousness of every one the fact that economic co-operation is one of the ways to a better future for Poland. It has also been brought to the con-

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<sup>5</sup> You may address a public official in German and he must reply in the same language. The language of command in all regiments, the "interior" language of the railroads, etc., is still German.

<sup>6</sup> This is contrary, in a sense, to Art. XIV of the treaty of Vienna, which stipulates free circulation between the different Polish provinces of products of the soil and of industry.

sciousness of every peasant, of every inhabitant of small cities, that only by some form of political organization will the Poles be able to secure any rights whatever. I am not able now to tell you about the way in which those organizations have come into existence and how they now act, but it is a subject admittedly worth studying. It has been studied very thoroughly by the Germans. Men are beginning to study it in England. I hope very much that some people in this country may wish to study it, too.

Since this war broke out—I was especially asked to speak about the changes occasioned by the war—Galicia has been promised<sup>7</sup> autonomy “so far as is consistent with the fact that Galicia forms part of” the Hapsburg empire. Therefore the promise extends, not to a union of Galicia with the other parts of Poland, but to autonomy while Galicia remains part of Austria. Before that proclamation, by the way, the Austrian censor had been cutting out all references to Polish independence. I have seen a good many Polish papers coming from Austrian Poland and Russian Poland and in the Austrian papers all references to independence were carefully cut out. Just what value the promise has and what is meant by autonomy seems to remain a mystery.

Now as to Russian Poland: As I have mentioned before, Russian Poland was established in 1815 as a kingdom, united with Russia by the person of the ruler, but declared to be a state by itself, with an administration of its own, and so on.<sup>8</sup> The promises were broken, and there ensued the Polish revolution in 1831,<sup>9</sup> which aroused a great deal of sympathy throughout Europe—sympathy only. The revolution was put down, with the help of Prussia, and part of the Polish privileges were taken

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<sup>7</sup> In a letter addressed by the late Emperor Franz Joseph to the Austrian Prime Minister.

<sup>8</sup> Treaty of Vienna, June 3, 1815, Art. I.

<sup>9</sup> Askenazy, “Poland and the Polish Revolution,” *Cambridge Modern History*, x.

away. There came another revolution in 1863. Again it was put down, thanks to the help which Russia received from Prussia.<sup>10</sup> Despite the protests of the western powers, France and England, the rest of the Polish rights were taken away. And perhaps I need not remind you of the old stories which are well known in this country and all over Europe, the stories of Siberia, stories of the general who was sent to extinguish the Polish revolution, and who sent a telegram, "Warsaw is quiet." I need not tell you how people were sent away for "colonization," that is, were sent away, ordered to live in some remote place, to marry women there, and never to leave that place, never to go back to their homes. I need not tell you of all the other cruelties which you must have heard about.

Since 1905 there has been a certain degree of improvement. We have been at least allowed to send our children, if we had the money, to private schools in which they could be taught in Polish. In 1914, at the outbreak of the war, the Poles had the great satisfaction of seeing, in the Grand Duke's proclamation, a confession that the partition of Poland had been a wrong, that it was the "living body of Poland" that had been torn in pieces—those were the words actually used. It was a satisfaction to those who had been told again and again that the Polish question was dead and buried. Satisfaction is not much, but still there were opened to us prospects of a brighter future. Now, as the war has gone on, more and more promises have been made. It has been recognized throughout Russia that the Polish problem ought to be considered very seriously. Whether to give Poland independence or no—that was a question to be debated; but it has at least been permitted to debate it openly, in the press, for instance. The liberation of Prussian and Austrian Poland could not be so discussed in Prussia or Austria.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Die Politischen Reden des Fürsten Bismarck*, I, 111 ff., 114 ff.

<sup>11</sup> Since this lecture was delivered the recent revolution in Russia has removed the old chains from that country, and it seems that Poland's prospects, too, will become all the brighter.

Prussia had had assigned to her, in 1815, at the Congress of Vienna, a large part of the original Poland. A manifesto was issued by the King of Prussia. He assured his new subjects that they "need not give up their nationality"; but the promise was soon broken. The position of the Poles grew worse and worse. Yet in 1831, during the Polish revolution against Russia, some Germans at least could see a romantic spell in Polish patriotism, and German poets, like Lenau, sang the glory of Poland. In 1848 the Poles were as responsible for, as active in, the general fight for freedom in Prussia, as any other people. Soon Prussia took again upon herself the task of doing away with Polish aspirations. Bismarck inaugurated a policy of extermination, the gist of which you will find in his political speeches. Take one of his statements in 1885: "The creation of a kingdom of Poland, the tearing away from Prussia of the Polish-speaking provinces is indeed only possible after a war unfortunate for Prussia."<sup>12</sup>

This, ladies and gentlemen, is perfectly true.

Bismarck was pursuing his policy in 1886 when he began to use public funds, to which Poles had also contributed by their taxes, to send Germans to the Polish provinces as colonists. After Bismarck's retreat there began the persecution of Polish school-children. In 1902, for instance, in Wrzesnia, some of them were beaten until their fingers were swollen for refusing to say their prayers in German. There came about a "strike" of Polish school-children. The number of strikers grew and grew until it reached a hundred thousand. Cruel means were used by the government to put down the strike. Then, in 1908, a statute was passed which forbade the use in any public meeting, except international congresses and election meetings, of any language but German. Exemption for twenty years was allowed to those districts in which the non-German population has always formed at least 60 per cent. The exception did not apply, therefore, to Polish meetings—in Westphalia,

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<sup>12</sup> *Die Politischen Reden des Fürsten Bismarck*, xi, 128.

for instance, or even in Polish districts in which German colonization had been artificially fostered to a considerable extent. Even this concession is to last only until 1928.<sup>13</sup>

In the same year a bill was passed allowing the semi-official Settlement Commission to expropriate people in the Polish provinces in order to promote the Germanization of those parts. Since that time Poles have actually been expropriated in order to give way to German colonization. The only weapon that could be taken up against all this oppression was, not revolution—that was impossible, since one machine gun would have done away with hundreds of men—but to form economic and to a limited extent political organizations. And these have been formed, by men such as Father Wawrzyniak and men of his school, such as Father Zimmermann, while other men promoted self-help among Polish landowners, as the Polish patriot, Marek Biedermann. You do not hear about them, but those people over in Europe who are interested in the Polish problem know very well that the Poles, although they have not been talking very much about themselves, have been able to withstand all the aggression of Poland's enemies. We have proved that, without foreign help, practically in the teeth of Europe, we have been able to maintain our power, to withstand hostile legislative action and an organization even as strong as is the Prussian.

A "promise of independence" has been recently extended by Germany. It relates only to the formation of a state "out of the districts conquered from Russia," and even in this promise there is the provision that the "exact frontiers of the new kingdom" shall be outlined later.<sup>14</sup>

Let me say a word or two about Polish intellectual activities, beginning with literature and art. More than once you may have heard it said that, after all, Poland's people are only Slavic barbarians. Have we not been told

<sup>13</sup> Vereinsgesetz (1908), sec. 12.

<sup>14</sup> This "promise" should be read in the light of the statements of Prince von Bülow, cited above.

over and over again that the best thing the Poles could do would be to give up their nationality as soon as they could, and assimilate themselves with their neighbors? I should not wish to encroach upon the province of Professor Noyes, but I may say that Polish literature was already well developed in the sixteenth century—we call that the Golden Age of Polish literature. For instance, I doubt very much whether there was at that time in Germany a poet as great as the Polish poet Kochanowski. In the seventeenth century, in the midst of all the wars that befell Europe, we find in Poland not only a good many writers on all subjects, not only poets, but even poetesses. Some of their works were, if you take the period into consideration, quite good. In the eighteenth century there was a new development of Polish literature, and in the beginning of the nineteenth century we had our three greatest poets, Mickiewicz, Krasinski, and Slowacki. Some of their works have been translated into English, many more into German, and I understand that Professor Noyes is busy preparing new editions of some of the masterpieces. The number of Polish poets who have written since then is large. The books of Monica Gardner on Polish poets should be studied carefully by all those who want to know about Polish poetry and Polish feeling. Modern Poland has a great host of first-class poets and novelists. In this country you seem to know more about Sienkiewicz than about any other Polish writer, but in Poland opinion is by no means unanimous, as to whether Sienkiewicz, who died recently, was really the best Polish writer of his generation. In any case we have several other writers who, in their respective lines, may be considered at least almost equal to him. Personally I agree that he was the greatest modern Polish novelist and one of the greatest in the world.

As to art, Poland has had several excellent painters—I may mention for instance Grottger, with his wonderful series, “Lithuania,” “War,” and so forth; also Siemiradzki and Matejko, whose pictures are well known in the

capitals of our conquerors. It is perhaps unnecessary to mention Polish music, especially the names, familiar to most of you, of Chopin, Wieniawski, Paderewski.

Again, as to learning, it may interest you to know that the University of Cracow, founded in 1364, reorganized in 1400, was, after the Bohemian University of Prague, the oldest university of central Europe. All the German universities were created after it. One of its most brilliant students at the end of the fifteenth century was young Copernicus, who later on became famous as astronomer and whose earliest teacher in astronomy was Wojciech Brudzewski, at that time professor at Cracow. In the centuries following, the University of Wilno was founded in 1578, Zamose in 1595, and Lwów in 1661. I just mention all this to you in order to show that we had some development before our neighbors "took care" of us.

At the outbreak of the present war there were only two Polish universities in existence, Cracow and Lwów. I should like to tell you much about them, but you would have, in any case, to take my word for it, so I had better just say briefly that I think among their faculties there is a great number of first-class scholars who, if they wished to discard their own language and write, for instance, in German, would long ago have become famous all over the world.

There are many learned Poles outside of Poland. Those of you who know anything about chemistry have heard of Madame Curie-Sklodowska, who discovered radium. She named one of the elements discovered by her, polonium, in honor of her own nation, to which she has ever remained faithful.

Many other Poles living abroad are famous in different fields, for instance, Ostrogorski, in political science; in anthropology (I want to pay homage here to a friend of mine) Miss Czaplicka, a young Polish girl who went some three years ago to northeastern Siberia as the head of an expedition and later published a very interesting and much-

appreciated book on the subject. She is being greatly honored in England and is the first woman to act as lecturer in the University of Oxford.

As to polities, you have probably heard a great deal of discussion on the vices of the ancient Poles and their want of organization. I have not time now to discuss Polish history, but as to modern organization I will just mention that the Polish economic and political associations in Prussian Poland, as well as in the other parts, have been the subject of much detailed study, research and—I am glad to say—appreciation on the part of people who are by no means friends of Poland and who describe those things only to enable the Prussian government to fight the Poles more fiercely.<sup>15</sup> I may say also that, so far as statesmanship is concerned, some of the best statesmen in Austria in the second half of the nineteenth century were Poles who were admitted to the Austrian government. Several Austrian ministers of finance from the second half of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the present war were Poles: Dunajewski, Bilinski, Korytowski, Zaleski; other Poles have served as Austrian ministers, e.g. Goluchowski, minister of foreign affairs, and Glabinski, minister of railroads, etc.

To sum up: If you think of it, the life of Poland is very curious in one respect. It is a nation without a state. In other countries the government promotes national activities. To Poland the governments are more or less hostile. If you want to preserve your nationality, you must have an organization, a national organization, which will work, so to speak, against the wishes of the governments. And yet, despite all the difficulties, the Polish nation has been constantly developing.

And this leads us to what I should call the spirit of Poland. You have heard a great deal about nationality, a thing which people are very fond of discussing just now. They say sometimes that nationality is, after all, only the

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<sup>15</sup> Cleinow, *Zukunft Polens*; Bernhard, *Das polnische Gemeinwesen im preussischen Staate*; and numerous others.

result of economic tendencies. Others say that it is in a sense just a religion, that people feel about nationality just as they feel about the principles of this or that church. From my experience, from what I have seen, I think that neither one of these views is correct. Polish patriotism shared by the broad masses, is certainly not due to the desire for economic advantages. Every Pole would be much better off economically if he gave up his nationality and consented to become a German, for instance.

How many thousands of mothers, both rich and poor, have taught their children to read and write Polish in a most characteristic way: they would sit with their knitting on their knees, and a book on their knitting: when the police came—the hostile governments have done a good deal of searching after such “criminals”—the knitting would lie on the book and the police might not discover what had been happening: was that a case of hunting after economic advantages? Or was it a question of “religious nationality”? No question of superhuman reward was involved, people have been doing and are doing those things only in order to serve what they love—their own country, their fellow Poles.

I have often been told by my mother how they used to go out into the fields and walk about; if there were no constables around, they would sing Polish patriotic songs. I do not know if in this country you can appreciate what there is in a patriotic song. I do not know if you can realize how much inspiration, how much consolation, one can get from a song. People have been punished for merely singing patriotic tunes. There was, for instance, a very interesting case in Prussian Poland not many years ago. An organization had got up a picnic. During the picnic a certain song was sung. Thereupon the president of the organization was prosecuted. The public prosecutor admitted that the words were harmless, but said that the melody was likely to promote a breach of peace. The de-

fendant was convicted. Yet, in spite of all these prosecutions, of which I can but give you an example, these things can not be stopped. I do not know if you can realize what a Polish patriotic celebration is. You listen to speeches, then you hear songs when everyone gets up, and you see tears in the eyes of old men and young children. I do not know if you can realize what it means to celebrate a national anniversary in a graveyard, with torches around you: you hear one of those thrilling songs which remind you of your duty to your country—your own country, not your conquerors’—songs which live in your ears forever.

There is something very interesting about the discipline of the Polish people. For instance, after the statutes of 1908, which I mentioned to you, there was organized in Poland a boycott of Prussian goods, of German goods generally and of Austrian goods. There is such a boycott at present in England. But there you have courts which punish you if you contravene the Trading with the Enemy Acts. In Poland there were no courts to convict you for a breach of the boycott. Rather, you would be convicted by the conquerors’ courts for boycotting the Germans. And yet—how those boycotting organizations developed! You could see little school girls going around the cities, from one shop to another, to find out whether or no the stores were selling German goods, such as German stationery. If they were, the children would “write to the paper about it.” In Russian Poland a boycott of the University was organized some years ago, because the government refused to restore to the University its Polish character. You could find people who would risk any sacrifices, would go abroad, would live away from their families, would lose their livelihood perhaps, would put their own families in danger, rather than go through the University which the Polish youth had declared under boycott. In such cases discipline is enforced simply by national conscience. A great deal of

that is due to the rôle of women. It might interest you to know that Bismarck considered Polish women especially dangerous. For instance, in 1885, when there was a discussion of the bill relating to the Settlement Commission, he made a point of stating that those people who would go to the eastern provinces as German colonists were to undertake not to marry Polish women, because Polish women usually make good Poles out of their husbands.<sup>16</sup>

One of the most striking examples of Polish patriotism is the Society of the Popular School, usually called T. S. L. in Galicia, founded some twenty-five years ago. It has scores of thousands of members all over the country, maintains elementary schools and public libraries in innumerable cities and villages, organizes popular lectures throughout the country, and even maintains some secondary schools. The members' subscription is forty cents a year. That is not much for you. But among those members you find for instance teachers of provincial schools whose whole salary amounts to some ten or twenty dollars a month. Out of that, they must pay for their food, lodging, clothing, and also pay the subscription to the society, for otherwise they would not be allowed to co-operate in the society's work. And yet somehow or other they manage to do that—and with how much enthusiasm!

What do the Poles want? The Poles want a place in the sun. But this does not mean that we want colonies or the right to exploit other people. We do not want the right to say to other people, "Get up because I want to sit down." We only want to have the right to live free, to live as a united, independent nation, without being compelled to serve, as so many of our people are compelled to serve now, one against the other, an Austrian Pole against a Russian Pole, a Russian Pole against his brother or uncle in the German army, all of them serving for foreign aspirations, for foreign ideals, for foreign policies, which

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<sup>16</sup> *Die politischen Reden des Fürsten Bismarck*, xi, 445, 464.

have nothing at all to do with Poland. We want to have our country to ourselves, and we want to keep away from other countries' struggles which do not concern us. Look at the present war in Europe. All the fighting in the eastern European theatre of war, except in the Balkans, has been on Polish soil. Why should our cities be razed to the ground? Why should our people be led away, turned practically into slaves? We want to be free, to be left to ourselves.

I shall close by telling you of a little banquet in which I took part some six or seven years ago. Two of our greatest professors were there. One of them is dead now. He was a man whose voice was heard throughout Poland. He was one of those men to whom you could listen and listen and listen and never get tired of listening. There were a few more of us—four students. We were discussing things Polish, discussing them in a way that was to remain an inspiration for years and years. I still remember a toast of that great man, Professor Milewski. The Poles, he said, the modern Poles, resembled a band of workmen digging a tunnel. The Poles in whose time we lost our independence, were those who first entered the tunnel. Out of light they entered into darkness. Then the present generation, and the few past generations were those people in the tunnel who had not seen the light before they entered and were not yet allowed the privilege of seeing the end of their work. Although he himself would not be able to see light after the work was finished, he hoped that at least we young men who were there would see it, that we would come out of the dark into the light and see a free Poland again.

Alas! He did not live to see the dawn of a better future. But there are signs now that things may turn that way. Some of you may have remarked that President Wilson said in his famous speech a few weeks ago:

“I take it for granted, for instance . . . that statesmen everywhere are agreed that there should be a united, independent, and autonomous Poland. . . .”

Yes, a united Poland, and an independent Poland. It is for the world as much as for us Poles to see to it that we may be a generation of those coming out of the tunnel into the light.

NOTE: The following books and articles may be useful for reference:

Swietochowski, "Poland and her Rôle in Europe," *Fortnightly Review*, 1915, xcvi, 502-512.

• Retinger, "Poland and the Present War," *English Review*, Dec., 1914, xix, 78-84.

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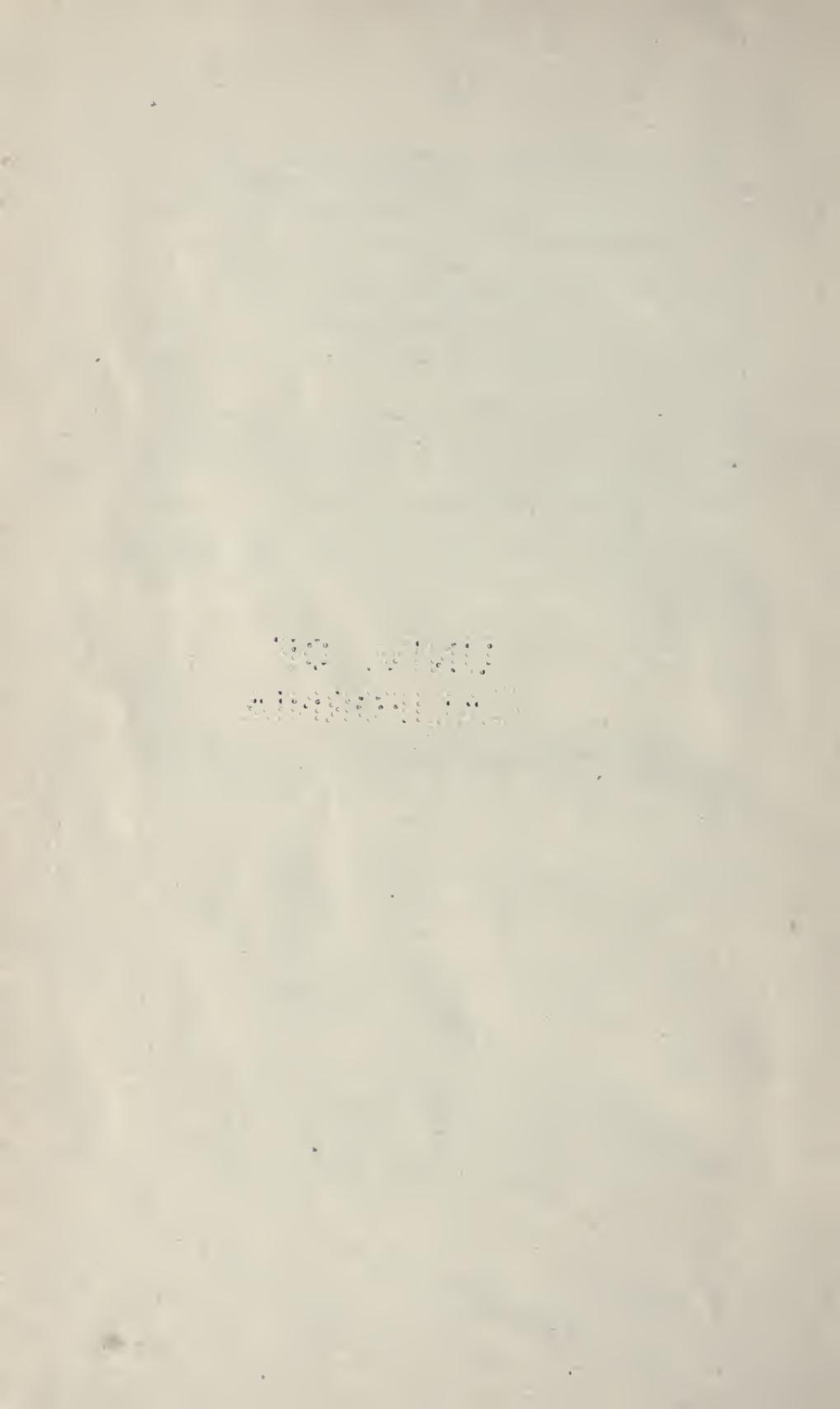
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